

Hold Your Head Up High

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Summary

Winona and Amanda meet while visiting the academy.

Notes

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As she leaves the academy science labs, Winona's attention is focused on her PADD. No messages from Jim, which *probably* means he hasn't managed to burn down the farmhouse in the time she's been gone. She makes a mental note to call that evening just in case.

She keeps her head down as she walks, PADD close to her face to avoid being recognised. She's already had to turn down two admirals who want her to give a speech to the students. Tell them about the *Kelvin*, about George. As if reliving the worst day of her life is such an appealing thought that she'll jump at the chance.

She's so focused on avoiding everyone that she nearly walks straight into a woman coming the other way. The woman's arms go out to steady herself, spilling the cup of liquid – coffee, Winona guesses from the colour – all over the path.

"I'm sorry," Winona gasps. "I didn't see you."

The woman smiles, shrugging. "It's okay," she says. "It's partly my fault. I wasn't looking where I was going. Too busy looking at the scenery." She glances around as if in evidence. "It's beautiful, isn't it? So green."

Winona takes her own look around. The woman has a point, she supposes. This part of the academy seems to be designed to show cadets exactly what they'll be missing once they go into space, with trees and flowers and bright green lawns stretching out across the campus. Nearby is a fountain, spouting water high into the air. George fell into it once, during a particularly spirited game of Frisbee. She teased him about it for weeks.

She pulls her gaze away quickly, focusing back on the woman, just as she asks, "Do you work here?"

Winona shakes her head. "Just visiting. A friend of mine asked for my assistance with a research project."

The woman nods. "I'm visiting my son," she explains. "He's a student here." She holds out a hand, smiling. "I'm Amanda, by the way."

"Winona," Winona replies, taking the offered hand. She hesitates, then adds, "I was going to get a snack at the mess hall, if you'd like to join me?" She gestures at Amanda's empty cup and adds, "I could buy you a drink?"

"You don't have to do that," Amanda replies. "But it might be nice to have some company." She checks the time and adds, "My son won't be out of class for another twenty minutes. Let me just send him a message, and I'd be happy to join you."

The mess hall isn't far, and it isn't long before they're sitting at a table with their drinks and a slice of cake each.

"So how long are you in visiting for?" Winona asks.

"Just a few days." Amanda takes a sip of what Winona now knows is tea. "You?"

"Same," Winona replies. Partly because she doesn't trust Jim not to get himself arrested again in her absence, and partly because the academy

makes her uncomfortable, like her skin is too tight. She's spent years carving out a reputation for herself that isn't based on being George Kirk's widow, and coming here reminds her that, in some eyes, that's all she'll ever be.

"How old is your son?" she asks, for lack of anything else to say.

"Nineteen," Amanda replies. "Just started his second year."

She sounds proud, and Winona wonders at it. If Jim or Sam decided to join Starfleet she wouldn't be proud, she'd be terrified.

"Do you have children?" Amanda asks.

"Two," Winona tells her. "Twenty-one and seventeen."

"Are either of them in Starfleet?"

"No," Winona says sharply. Probably too sharply, from the look on Amanda's face. "No," she repeats more softly. "Sam's studying biology at college, and Jim..." She trails off briefly. "Jim's still deciding what he wants to do." She shrugs and adds, "He's going through a rebellious stage." It both worries and infuriates her that he doesn't seem to care about his future, but teenagers are like that. He'll settle down eventually, she's sure.

Amanda smiles. "Sometimes it comforts me to know teenagers are all the same," she says. "My son's decision to rebel is what led him here."

"You don't seem like you mind," Winona points out.

"Oh, I don't, but his father does." She shakes her head. "Sarek wanted Spock to follow in his footsteps and join the VSA, but Spock had his own plans. It's caused quite a rift between them, I'm afraid."

Winona wants to be sympathetic, but her brain has gotten caught on something. "Sarek? Like Ambassador Sarek?" Suddenly it all comes together and she barely keeps her jaw from dropping. "You're Amanda *Grayson*." The first human *ever* to not only marry a Vulcan, but have a child with one. She's in the history books.

Then again, so is Winona.

Amanda smiles sheepishly, taking another sip of tea. "Guilty."

"Wow," Winona says. "... didn't know."

"That's the idea," Amanda replies. "People always treat me differently once they know who I am, and I didn't want that." She shrugs. "Sometimes it's nice to feel invisible for once."

Winona nods. "I understand." She takes a breath and adds, "My full name's Winona Kirk. As in George Kirk." Amanda's eyes widen, and Winona's lips twist in a wry smile. "You see, everyone knows who I am, too."

"I'm sorry," Amanda says.

"Yeah, me too," Winona replies. "But it's okay. I manage. As do you, I assume."

"Most of the time," Amanda replies, and they share a smile.

Amanda checks the time and stands abruptly. "Oh, gosh, I have to go!" She glances at Winona and adds, "I enjoyed talking to you. Can I get your number? Maybe we can meet up again sometime."

Winona nods. "I'd like that."

They exchange numbers, and with a final wave, Amanda leaves. Winona sits there for a few minutes longer, finishing her drink, then clears away her leftovers and heads back across campus.

She holds her head high as she walks, letting them look. If Amanda can survive living years on a planet where the human population barely reaches three figures, she can deal with the notoriety of being George Kirk's widow.

She's still not going to give that stupid speech, though.

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